

Attachment 2

Scoping Report

**American River Watershed, California
Long-Term Study
Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement/
Environmental Impact Report**

Scoping Report

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Prepared for

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**AMERICAN RIVER WATERSHED, CALIFORNIA
LONG-TERM STUDY
SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT/
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT
SCOPING REPORT**

Background

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), The Reclamation Board of the State of California (Reclamation Board), and the Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency (SAFCA) are investigating the feasibility of providing long-term flood protection and environmental restoration for the Lower American River and the Sacramento Area.

Acting as lead agencies under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the Corps and the Reclamation Board are preparing a joint Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (Supplemental EIS/EIR). The Supplemental EIS/EIR will supplement the Final Supplemental EIS/EIR prepared on the American River Flood Control Investigation in 1996. Major elements evaluated in the 1996 Final Supplemental EIS/EIR included constructing and operating a floodwater detention dam just downstream of the Auburn damsite, lowering the spillways at Folsom Dam, and increasing the conveyance capacity of the flood control system downstream of Folsom Dam.

Generally, the study area for the Supplemental EIS/EIR includes the Folsom Dam and Reservoir, the Lower American River, the Sacramento Bypass, and the Yolo Bypass. Operational impacts of the project could expand the study area to include the North and South Forks of the American River, the Sacramento River, and the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

This report describes the project alternatives, scoping process, and comments received to date.

Flood Control Alternatives

During the scoping process, the Corps and the Reclamation Board brought forward a range of alternatives that would enhance flood protection for the Sacramento Metropolitan Area. These alternatives included increasing the conveyance capacity of the flood system downstream from Folsom Dam, increasing the capacity of Folsom Reservoir to store floodwaters, instituting an anticipatory release plan, and combining the three alternatives. These alternatives, along with the No-Action Alternative, will be evaluated in the Supplemental EIS/EIR.

Stepped Release

The Stepped Release Alternative would provide the maximum level of flood protection without additional detention. The Stepped Release Alternative would include modifying levees and possibly enlarging the river outlets at Folsom Dam to allow higher objective releases. Two objective release scenarios have been proposed, one allowing releases of up to 160,000 cfs and the other allowing releases of up to 180,000 cfs. Increasing objective releases to 160,000 cfs would require strengthening some levees along the American River. Increasing objective releases to 180,000 cfs would require increasing the height of levees along the American River, raising the height of some of the bridges that cross the American River, increasing the size of the Sacramento Bypass and Weir, and increasing the heights of levees in the Yolo Bypass.

Dam Raise

The Dam Raise Alternative would improve the level of flood protection by raising Folsom Dam to a maximum flood control pool elevation of 478 feet above mean sea level (msl), 482 feet above msl, or 487 feet above msl. Elements associated with increasing the maximum flood control pool elevation would include changes to existing gates, walls, piers, bridges, main concrete, wing dams, and the spillway bridge, and the addition of a new river crossing.

Anticipatory Release

The Anticipatory Release Alternative would reduce flood damage by expanding weather forecast-based flood control operations at Folsom Dam beyond the scope of the currently authorized flood management plan. Increased flood protection would be achieved by extending the period during which dam operators make flood control releases in excess of reservoir inflows, based on flood forecasting and weather information.

Ecosystem Restoration

Ecosystem restoration is a project purpose in addition to flood control. The study will evaluate measures to enhance riparian habitat values at sites along the Lower American River.

Scoping Meetings

The Corps and the Reclamation Board held three scoping meetings in October 2000 to solicit public comments to determine the scope of the Lower American River Long-Term Investigation EIR. Scoping meetings were held in the cities of Folsom, Sacramento, and Woodland, California on October 3, 4, and 5, respectively. Before the meetings, notices were published in local newspapers announcing the time, date, location and purpose of the meetings. Invitations to the meetings and copies of the Notice of Preparation were distributed to an extensive mailing list of stakeholders throughout the Lower American River region and across the state.

The scoping meetings were conducted in an “open house” format. Participants were provided a self-guided view of exhibits describing Lower American River flood control history and potential alternatives. Attendees were invited to talk with representatives from SAFCA, the Reclamation Board, and the Corps. A court reporter was available at each meeting to record verbal comments. Interested parties also had the opportunity to provide comments through postal mail, e-mail, and a toll-free telephone number.

Publicity

To publicize the meetings, the Corps mailed approximately 2,000 public meeting notices to interested parties throughout the Lower American River region and across the state. A news release was prepared and forwarded to the local news media.

Staff

The following representatives from the Corps, the Reclamation Board, SAFCA, and consultants participated in the scoping meetings:

Tom Adams, Corps

Patricia Roberson, Corps

Jeff Groska, Corps

Jim Taylor, Corps

Debbie Layton, Corps

Susan Rosebrough, Corps

Andrea Bonilla, Corps

Gary Britter, Corps

Tore Pearson, Corps

Annalena Bronson, Reclamation Board

Steve Yaeger, Reclamation Board

Butch Hodgkins, SAFCA

Tim Washburn, SAFCA

John Bassett, SAFCA

Gregg Roy, Jones & Stokes¹

Gregg Ellis, Jones & Stokes¹

Chris Elliott, Jones & Stokes¹

Jerry Dion, Jones & Stokes¹

Selene Jacobs, Jones & Stokes¹

Ric Reinhardt, MBK Engineers²

Barbara Gualco²

¹ Consultant to the Corps

² Consultant to SAFCA

Meeting Agenda and Content

As previously described, the scoping meetings were presented in an open house format, using large, informative exhibits. The topics of the six exhibits included: American River Flood Control History, Decision Making Process, Folsom Dam Raise Plan, Stepped Release Plan, Additional Anticipatory Release Plan, and Ecosystem Restoration. The following is a summary

of the exhibits displayed at the meetings. Please also see Appendix 1, “Scoping Meeting Exhibits.”

Exhibit 1: American River Flood Control History

This introductory display provides a chronological review of flood control events such as the construction of Folsom Dam in 1956, the passage of NEPA and CEQA in 1969-1970 and the Water Resources Development Act in 1992, the floods of 1986 and 1997, and the passage of the Local Assessment District in 2000.

Exhibit 2: Decision-Making Process

Exhibit 2 describes the proposed project as a congressionally mandated extension of the American River Watershed Investigation (ARWI). The purpose of the Supplemental EIS/EIR is to (1) examine the feasibility of raising Folsom Dam to create additional flood storage capacity, an alternative not pursued in either of the preceding studies, (2) re-examine alternatives previously studied in light of the expected accomplishments of the improvements which Congress has already approved, and (3) present new information on opportunities for environmental restoration along the Lower American River. NEPA and CEQA require a comparative analysis of the environmental impacts of the proposed projects and alternatives. Potential alternatives to the proposed project include No-Action, Folsom Dam Raise Plan, Stepped Release Plan, and Additional Anticipatory Release Plan.

Exhibit 3: Folsom Dam Raise Plan

Exhibit 3 provides a project description of the Folsom Dam Raise Plan. Under the Folsom Dam Raise Plan, Folsom Dam and wing dams and dikes would be raised to create additional reservoir storage space to be used exclusively for increased flood storage. Different dam raise alternatives (up to a 12-foot raise) will be included in the evaluation of the Folsom Dam Raise Plan. Depending on the extent of the dam raise, this alternative could provide a level of flood protection as great as a 1-in-210-chance flood in any given year.

Potential environmental impacts could include construction- and operation-related impacts to vegetation, wildlife, air quality, traffic, noise, recreation and land use. Key issues associated with the Dam Raise Plan include level of flood protection, project costs, impacts on other uses of Folsom Reservoir, construction design and process, bridge construction to divert traffic, and minimization of traffic impacts.

Exhibit 4: Stepped Release Plan

Exhibit 4 provides a project description of the Stepped Release Plan. Under the Stepped Release Plan, the capacity of the American River channel below Folsom Dam would be increased to accommodate higher flood control releases from the dam. This capacity increase could entail raising the American River levees up to 3 feet higher than their current elevation,

modifying existing drainage and transportation infrastructure along the lower river, and raising and strengthening portions of the levee system along the Sacramento River and the Sacramento and Yolo Bypasses. Three increased channel capacity options will be evaluated. Depending on the extent of the increase in channel capacity, this alternative could provide a level of flood protection as great as a 1-in-170 chance of flood in any given year.

Potential environmental impacts could include construction- and operation-related impacts to vegetation, wildlife, air quality, noise, levee integrity, interior drainage, fisheries, transportation, and land use. Key issues associated with the Stepped Release Plan include: level of flood protection, project costs, construction design and process, effect of increased channel capacity on lands protected by levees outside the American River watershed, modifications of the Howe Avenue Bridge to accommodate the 180,000 cfs option, and the effect of implementation of this alternative on the American River Parkway.

Exhibit 5: Additional Anticipatory Release Plan

Exhibit 5 provides a project description of the Additional Anticipatory Release Plan. Under this alternative, additional flood storage would be created within the existing configuration of Folsom Reservoir by releasing water from the reservoir, based on forecasted flood inflows. Outflows from the reservoir would be allowed to exceed inflow. This alternative would augment the Flood Management Plan. Options would vary by how much in advance of peak inflow releases would be made, and by the amount of flow that would be released.

Potential environmental impacts could include operation-related impacts to water supply, hydropower, recreation, and fisheries. Key issues associated with the Additional Anticipatory Release Plan include: reliability of flood protection provided by the plan, given the current state of weather forecasting; effect of the plan on other uses of Folsom Reservoir if anticipated reservoir inflows do not materialize; and identification and funding of potential costs of the plan.

Exhibit 6: Ecosystem Restoration

Exhibit 6 describes the purpose of ecosystem restoration. Ecosystem restoration is one of the primary missions of the Corps' Civil Works program. The purpose of Civil Works ecosystem restoration activities is to restore significant ecosystem function and structure as well as the dynamic processes that have been degraded. The intent of restoration is to reestablish the attributes of a naturalistic, functioning, self-regulating system.

The combination of a century-and-a-half of mining, development, floodplain constriction, dam construction, and flow modifications have resulted in the alteration of the physical processes that sustain ecosystem values, thereby contributing to significant degradation of the Lower American River ecosystem. Some of the issues within this ecosystem include high flood plains, channel downcutting, invasive non-native plants, dredger tailings, and habitat for predator fish.

Restoration objectives for the Lower American River ecosystem include enhancing plant, wildlife, and aquatic habitat values, increasing shaded riparian aquatic habitat, increasing floodplain habitat diversity, improving connectivity between the low-flow channel and river terraces, enhancing habitat for the Sacramento splittail, anadromous fish, and the giant garter snake, facilitating establishment of native plant species, and allowing for recreation opportunities without compromise of habitat functions and values.

Verbal Comments

A court reporter was present at all three meetings to record verbal comments. A total of three verbal comments were recorded. Appendix 2 includes transcripts of recorded verbal comments. In addition to offering verbal comments, interested parties were invited to provide input through comment cards, postal mail, e-mail, and a toll-free telephone number during the public comment period.

Written Comments

A total of 16 written comment letters were received by the deadline of October 20, 2000. Appendix 2 includes copies of those letters. All comments received at the scoping meetings and written comments in response to the NOP are being considered during preparation of the Supplemental EIS/EIR.

Public Comment Summary

The following is a summary of the comments received to date. All comments and questions are categorized by main points of interest.

Proposed Project and Alternatives

Recommendations were offered regarding the project description and alternatives selection, including the following:

- Provide a complete summary of background information, critical issues, assumptions and decisions.
- Provide a clear description of project purpose and need, alternatives, potential impacts, and mitigation.
- Describe existing conditions of the American River Basin, including information on land use, flood control practices, and biological resources.
- Consider ideas and reasonable alternatives proposed by the public that may not be within the jurisdiction of the lead agency.

- Recognize that the Folsom Dam Raise Alternative provides needed flood protection without sacrificing water supply or impacting downstream flood control facilities.
- Recognize that the Additional Anticipatory Release Plan provides flood protection while maintaining and enhancing water supplies.
- Assess whether an increased flood plain area reduces flow rate, maintenance, impacts on wildlife, vegetation, and recreation.
- Consider establishing natural flood buffers such as wetlands rather than channelizing the river.

Land Use

Recommendations were offered regarding potential impacts on land use, including the following:

- Determine if the project will worsen conditions for landowners downstream from the proposed improvements.
- Consider how landowners prohibited from farming their land will be compensated.
- Consider implementing remedies used on the Mississippi River, such as removing homes and even towns from the flood plain.

Transportation and Circulation

Recommendations were offered regarding potential impacts to transportation and circulation, including the following:

- Consider potential effects of a Folsom Dam Road closure on traffic flow and regional transportation patterns.
- Confirm that the condition of various American River bridge footings are adequately substantial following the floodwaters of 1998.
- Recognize that local government may not be able to use Federal Emergency Relief funds to repair damage to local bridges resulting from an emergency release from the dam.
- Identify impacts and mitigation measures for all bridge locations along the main stem of the Lower American River below Folsom Dam under various release conditions.

- Preserve local bridge stability.

Air Quality

Recommendations were offered regarding potential impacts on air quality, including the following:

- Discuss air quality standards, ambient conditions, and potential air quality impacts.
- Demonstrate compliance of project with Clean Air Act.

Water Quality

Recommendations were offered regarding potential impacts on water quality and supply, including the following:

- Assess the potential impacts to water quality in all four alternatives.
- Discuss how the project will comply with State and local water quality management plans and Environmental Protection Agency–approved water quality standards.
- Identify Section 404 Clean Water Act requirements and management and mitigation proposals to ensure compliance with the Act.
- Discuss specific monitoring programs that will be implemented to determine potential impacts on water quality.

Water Supply

Recommendations were offered regarding the potential ability to store additional water, including the following:

- Assess the potential impacts to water supply in all four alternatives, including changes to water quantity, timing of diversions, and shortages in dry years.
- Provide adequate amounts of water to affected parties and municipalities.
- Consider how additional water storage may prompt future applications to appropriate water.
- Evaluate reasonably foreseeable future projects to store additional water in Folsom Reservoir.

- Assess opportunities for enhancing water supplies, such as diversion, banking, and exchange in cooperation with the American River Basin Cooperating Agencies.
- Consider how divergent type facilities such as tributary outlets and pipelines could reduce Lower American River water flow.
- Consider potential effects of a Folsom Dam Road closure on water supply for the city of Folsom.

Levee Raise

Recommendations were offered regarding the impacts of raising levee and dam levels, including the following:

- Assess whether increased dam height will cause permanent impacts on the additional acreage covered by water.
- Assess whether increased levee height will cause greater flood-stage water flow rates and require increased maintenance.
- Consider the potential graffiti attraction of flood walls and the ongoing maintenance cost of graffiti removal.

Potential Impacts of Increased Floodflows

Recommendations were offered regarding potential effects of increased floodflows, including the following:

- Determine whether alteration of downstream riverbed morphology at local bridge locations will occur.
- Determine whether contribution of runoff to downstream flood control facilities will occur under the Stepped Release Alternative.
- Ensure analysis and mitigation of impacts resulting from increased flows.
- Consider the possible increased threat of flooding to the city of Rio Vista.
- Include modeled water levels and velocities for each release scenario.

Biological Resources

Recommendations were offered regarding potential impacts on biological resources, including the following:

- Evaluate the proposed restoration project's potential for habitat restoration, habitat fragmentation, and habitat connectivity, and the cumulative effects on species viability.
- Evaluate the ability of the proposed project to help reestablish and maintain long-term species viability and productivity within the project area.
- Indicate what measures will be taken to protect critical wildlife habitat areas from potential adverse effects of the project.
- Identify potential impacts to wetlands and aquatic ecosystems.
- Consider potential effects of closing Folsom Dam Road on vegetation.

Cultural Resources

Recommendations were offered regarding potential impacts on cultural resources, including the following:

- Consult with the Native American Heritage Commission and complete an archeological inventory survey.

Recreation

Recommendations were offered regarding potential impacts to recreation, including the following:

- Consider potential effects of closing Folsom Dam Road on recreation at Folsom Reservoir and along the American River.

Jurisdiction

Recommendations were offered regarding agency jurisdiction over the project site, including:

- Determine whether the proposed project is State sovereign land under the jurisdiction of the State Lands Commission.

Interagency Consultation and Coordination

Recommendations were offered regarding the need for consultation and coordination of efforts with other agencies and organizations, including the following:

- Describe past, present and proposed flood protection projects and how they may interact with other water supply and restoration projects in the American River Basin.
- Include a discussion of related projects being investigated by other agencies to avoid a piecemeal approach to water management for water impounded by Folsom Dam.
- Consult with the Lower American River Task Force and Lower American River Fish Group on their development of a River Corridor Management Plan for the Lower American River.
- Consult with the Water Forum Successor Effort in developing ecosystem restoration measures.
- Develop a regional conjunctive use/banking program by the Sacramento Metropolitan Water Authority, the Sacramento North Area Groundwater Management Authority, and the American River Basin Cooperating Agencies.
- Determine whether National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System and Clean Water Act Section 404 permits and consultation with the State Water Resources Control Board and Corps would be required.
- Coordinate with the Department of Water Quality throughout the plan review process.

Project Costs and Funding

Recommendations were offered regarding the potential project costs and funding sources, including the following:

- Provide full disclosure and discussion of possible funding, implementation, enforcement, and monitoring commitments, assurances, and mechanisms.
- Conduct a cost-benefit analysis.
- Assess whether costs of land acquisition are less than those of continuous levee and dam maintenance.

Environmental Justice

Recommendations were offered regarding potential environmental justice issues, including the following:

- Describe the measures taken by the Corps to comply with Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, including (a) analysis of the environmental effects of the project on minority and low-income populations, and (b) provision of opportunities for affected communities to provide input into the NEPA process.

Appendix 1. Scoping Meeting Exhibits

Exhibit 1 - American River Flood Control History

Exhibit 2 - Decision-Making Process

Exhibit 3 - Folsom Dam Raise Plan

Exhibit 4 - Stepped Release Plan

Exhibit 5 - Additional Anticipatory Release Plan

Exhibit 6 - Ecosystem Restoration Plan